

Title	Places Hardly Exist
Type	Article
URL	http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/10239/
Date	2016
Citation	Voegelin, Salomé (2016) Places Hardly Exist. Island Song.
Creators	Voegelin, Salomé

Usage Guidelines

Please refer to usage guidelines at <http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact ualresearchonline@arts.ac.uk.

License: Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives

Unless otherwise stated, copyright owned by the author

ISLANDS SONGS

Nicolas Perret & Silvia Ploner

24 APRIL — 22 MAY 2016
OPENING: 23 APRIL, 7PM

SIDE A

NÝEY

2014-2016

11-channel sound installation

Mix: François Bonnet

Recordings Surtsey by Borgþór Magnússon, recordings Bjarnarey, Elliðaey and Heimaey by Nicolas Perret and Silvia Ploner in February and July 2013.

SIDE B

ALL DEPENDS ON THE SUN

2015

sound piece with subtitles
27'19"

Mix: Philippe Charriot

Recordings by Nicolas Perret and Silvia Ploner in Finland, September 2014 and February 2015.
Additional music by Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith.
VLF recordings by Tero Raita.

Originally produced by the programme *Klangkunst* of the German national radio broadcaster Deutschlandradio Kultur, with the support of the Surtsey Research Society. Published by the Belgian Label *Unfathomless* in 2015. The radio piece was awarded the first prize in the category Radioarte by the 10th Bienal Internacional de Radio (2014), granted with *Du côté des ondes* from SCAM (2013) and the Phonurgia Nova Prize/GMVL residency (2012). *Nýey* was nominated for the Prix Phonurgia Nova (2015) and the Prix Europa (2014) and got an honourable mention from Ars Acustica (2015).

Originally produced by the Creative Audio Unit of the national Australian radio broadcaster ABC, for *Soundproof* (2015), with the support from the Cultural Fund of Südtirol, Deutschlandradio Kultur, Goethe-Institute Finland, the Finnish Society of Bio-art (Ars Bioarctica Residency) and the Sodankylä Geophysical Observatory. *All Depends on the Sun* was nominated for the Prix Europa (2015).

NICOLAS PERRET and SILVIA PLONER

Pristine territories, unfathomable phenomena, microscopic fields.

Nicolas Perret (*1978) and Silvia Ploner (*1982) use recording technologies to probe into the real of what they call “sonic insularities.” Considering these milieus as their laboratories, they explore them, meticulously looking for the faint, the unsuspected, the sonic detail, the odd. They undertake projects in the long term that result in sound pieces, sound installations, performances and publications.

GRIMMUSEUM gUG

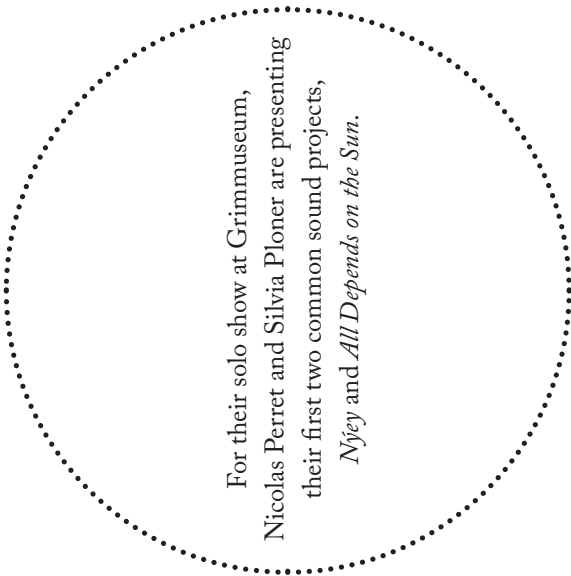
Fichtestrasse. 2, 10967 Berlin
www.grimmuseum.com
info@grimmuseum.com
Wed-Sat 2-6pm



ISLANDS SONGS

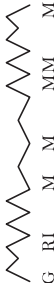
Nicolas Perret & Silvia Ploner

Evolving around the motifs of creation, colonisation and metamorphosis of a territory, *Nýey* takes the island of Surtsey at its core. Emerged off the coast of Iceland in 1963, Surtsey is closed for the public since its birth. Being the youngest member of the Westman archipelago, the island serves science as a window to the past of the older islands. Reciprocally, those older islands are studied as windows to what Surtsey might become like in the future. Following this approach of the island as a sort of “time capsule,” *Nýey* investigates in Surtsey’s assumed past, present and possible future with sounds drifted from recordings made on and around the islands of Bjarnarey, Elliðaey, Heimaey and Surtsey. The project started in 2013 and has since taken different shapes: a 4.1 sound installation, a radio piece and a CD release. For Grimmuseum *Nýey* was recomposed for 11-channels and unfolds over four rooms.



Since ancient times historical writings, scientific reports and indigenous myths relay audible sounds accompanying northern lights. Recent studies suggest that we are dealing with sounds that exist during geomagnetic storms, but most likely do not originate from the visual aurora. However, the existence of those sounds has always been a controversial issue and remains one to this day. By analysing the auditory memory of those who have encountered and/or studied this phenomenon, *All Depends on the Sun* opens reflections on the inner nature of listening. At Grimmuseum the piece is accompanied by a projection with English subtitles.

Both works are field recordings based and cultivate a field in-between documentary, sound art and electroacoustic composition.



Njey as it is installed at the Grimmuseum produces approximately 1000 cubic meters of sound. This unit of measure seems most appropriate as the work generates a dense mass of erosion, sand and wind that does not create a flat land or a linear path, but a volumetric territory that impresses on me my own geological formation rather than a mammalian birth.

The churning, turning motions degrade the surface of the gallery walls performing an erosion of their visual permanence through the invisible mobility of sound. They make me sense a space materialise rather than already being there, and my listening reciprocates this geological process through the materialisation of my own shape on its slow and rolling ground.

Centred by but not at the centre of the shifting textures of field recordings made on the Westman Islands off the coast of Iceland: slowed down, equalised, filtered and reversed; worked through the basic gestures of electroacoustic music, I respond to decay and reconfiguration with my own vibrational density. My body becomes a slice of this geological formation, not in an anthropocentric or colonial occupation, but through serendipitous collaborations with its invisible movements, whose textures show me my smallness and instil in me the responsibility of my own position.

The vibrations of the island as they proliferate through these rooms make a world appear from invisible connections within which my body oscillates as a thing amidst other things. The rolling configuration moves as I move through its composition, feeling rather than hearing the waves that erode the very fabric of its certain form, just as they erode the form of the volcanic island, down to its heart, the Palagonite, within which it might live a thousand years.

Vibrations sound the inexhaustible condition of the world and the infinitude of this work, which grasps what was and what will be through the intensity of a geological continuum made from the movement of rocks, sand and earth as they form dense and invisible sounds that register their appearance and disappearance, and show us what is there, and what else might become visible from the as yet unseen and even from the as yet unheard.

The piece creates the exhibition space as a vibration-environment that does not sound the geography of the island or the architecture of the gallery, but the dynamic of the world as a transformative mass without boundaries but with thresholds within which we can hear not only known sounds but also new sounds and what we like about them.

The notion of field recording binds the work to a real place, the island of Surtsey, which is surveyed once a year for four days, charted in minute detail to understand and compare what was and what will be. In the context of this exhibition however, the island ceases to be an actual land mass and becomes a conceptual device to survey not rocks but a geological fluidity whose vibrations sound as an arche-sonic: the mobile material of an invisible and inexhaustible texture that illuminates the possibilities of the world and binds me into their weave, which I join through my modest participation.

All Depends on the Sun composes sentences of scientific speculation on the existence of audible sounds accompanying the ‘Aurora borealis’, the lights of the northern hemisphere. The syncopated rhythm of the phrases calls for participation in the uncertainty of the heard and makes us consider how we might talk about its invisible materiality when no cause, source or relationship can be found to anchor it in. *These places hardly exist*

Sound brings us to the controversy of what is not supposed to exist, what cannot be scientifically proven to exist but defies expectations by existing nevertheless. *We started to discuss what this could be*

Following the recountings by the scientists of the noises that they tell us appear during the aurora the doubt in the heard becomes the motivation to suspend habits of scientific research and the preconceptions of measureable knowledge to reach the ephemeral and call the invisible by its proper name. *There would have to be some new word to describe it*

What would this word be and what could it communicate of the heard at the highest latitude of this world. And how could this name once designated reverberate other unheard sounds, illuminating other possibilities of this world which equally remain unnamed and thus unable to make themselves count within what we consider to be actually real.

Onomatopoeic performances try to grasp those unnamed sounds on the body, to give them a home and an anchor. But my body and my voice do not form an unaffected conduit for the noises of the world but bring my own disturbances to the heard. Thus how can we witness the ephemeral and share in the invisible to give it a vocabulary without descending into a ventriloquism that generates myths and parallel fictions? In other words, how to transgress the borders of accepted truths and facts without supporting a solipsism that defies communication and reality.

As if in response instead of closing perception into mythology the sounds that appear to coincide with the Nordic Lights guide us beyond the possibilities of this world into its impossibilities: that which for physiological, aesthetic, ideological but also for socio-political or economic reasons we cannot or do not want to hear. Listening to sounds that might or might not be there opens perception to other variants of this world that I can reach in experience rather than in truth. Once I accept them as the real fictions of my auditory imagination, I can start to hear other things; I can expand my sonic sensibility towards other realities that are not untruths but are the truths of an involved and practice-based experience that generate real possibilities which impact on what I see and hold consequences for how I know. *It is very possible that these persons who have made these observations are more sensitive*

And thus, rather than forming a non-human interpretation of the world, ascertained in scientific proof in order to avoid the solipsism of individuated perception, *All Depends on the Sun* frames perception as doubt and invites participation in the unknown vis-à-vis which I have no certain and permanent place but only a temporary existence. *I mean you should not be there*

The rejection of the non-provable rather than enabling a non-anthropocentric worldview focuses the dominance of a human-centred perspective on the limits of our scientific ability and reach. It is thus maybe not in scientific analysis, but in engaged ears that I reach, temporarily and in great doubt another world, which is not a parallel world, easily dismissed as ‘wholly other’, but is the plural reality of this world, which includes the incommensurable not as another measure, but as its possible impossibilities: that which might well be but which we cannot see even if we hear it rumble.